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ABSTRACT

This report measures the amount of black migration from and to the nonmetropolitan parts of the United States south from 1965-70 and 1990-95. It considers trends both within the south and with the rest of the nation. For perspective, comparisons are made with the movement of the non-black population, more than 90 percent of which is white. In the period between 1965 and 1995, black migration from the nonmetropolitan (rural and small-town) south to places in the north and west declined significantly, shifting instead mostly to the metropolitan south. This outmovement, in turn, became offset by migration of blacks into (or back to) rural districts from metropolitan areas. Net population loss is still evident in areas of the western nonmetropolitan south that have significant proportions of blacks, but not in the eastern south. Migration lowered the education level of the nonmetropolitan black population somewhat by a net loss of college graduates and a net inflow of persons who had not finished high school. Poverty rates of blacks coming into the nonmetropolitan south were as high as those of the nonmigrant population, indicating no general income benefit from the urban inflow. (Contains 27 references, 11 figures, and 3 tables.) (SM)

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THE SHIFTING PATTERNS OF BLACK MIGRATION FROM AND INTO THE NONMETROPOLITAN SOUTH, 1965-95

Glenn Fuguitt, John Fulton, Calvin Beale

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Abstract

In the period 1965-95, Black migration from the nonmetropolitan (rural and small-town) South to places in the North and West declined significantly, shifting instead mostly to the metropolitan South. This outmovement, in turn, became offset by migration of Blacks into (or back to) rural districts from metropolitan areas. Net population loss is still evident in areas of the western nonmetropolitan South that have significant proportions of Blacks, but not in the eastern South. Migration lowered the education level of the nonmetropolitan Black population somewhat by a net loss of college graduates and a net inflow of persons who had not finished high school. Poverty rates of Blacks coming into the nonmetropolitan South were as high as those of the nonmigrant population, indicating no general income benefit from the urban inflow.

Keywords: Black migration, nonmetropolitan population, rural South, education, poverty

Acknowledgments

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Summary

This report focuses on the migration of Blacks between the nonmetropolitan (nonmetro) South and the rest of the Nation from 1965-70 through 1990-95. It considers trends both within the South and with the rest of the Nation, including education and poverty status of migrants. For perspective, comparisons are made with the movement of the non-Black population, more than 90 percent of which is White.

From 1965-95, perhaps the most dramatic change in southern Black nonmetro migration was the major decline in the proportion of outmigrants who moved to Northern or Western States. From 1965-70, 46 percent of outmigrants moved to those States, but by 1990-95 only 13 percent did so, as the great majority chose to move to southern metro areas instead.

Simultaneously, the rate of movement of southern metro Blacks into the nonmetro South also rose throughout the 30-year period, but especially during the 1990s. By 1990-95, the movement of Blacks from Southern cities and suburbs into the rural and small-town environment of the nonmetro South nearly equaled the movement in the opposite direction.

Data from the 1990 Census show that the nonmetro South's migration interchange with both the North and West and the metro South led to a net loss during 1985-90 of Blacks having at least a 4-year college degree. Twice as many Black college graduates moved to the North and West and the metro South as came from those locations to the nonmetro South. At the other end of the education scale, 11 percent more Blacks who had not finished high school moved into the nonmetro South than moved away. Many of these inmigrants are thought to be older people, from a less educated prior generation, returning to rural homes. Thus, the pattern of migration acted to retard progress somewhat in advancing the educational status of nonmetro Blacks.

Given the educational makeup of migrants, it is not surprising that the poverty rate in 1990 of Blacks moving into the nonmetro South nearly equaled that of nonmetro residents who had not moved during the 1985-90 period. For both inmigrants and nonmigrants, two-fifths lived in households with poverty-level income. Nonmetro Blacks moving to the North and West or the metro South had somewhat lower poverty incidence in 1990 than did the nonmigrant population of the areas they left. This finding reflects both the outmigrants' better education levels and the higher wages and steadier employment of metro labor markets.

Results from the 2000 Census show that the higher the proportion of Blacks in nonmetro counties in 1990, the lower the average increase was in total county population during the 1990s. Among counties with Black majorities, the total population grew by just 7 percent, with many counties declining, indicative of continued net outmigration. In contrast, nonmetro counties where less than a third of the population was Black averaged 14 percent growth. This growth pattern had a regional aspect. In the Southern States west of Georgia, where Black nonmetro poverty rates have been the highest, growth was lower and the likelihood of decline higher than in the South Atlantic States. Many nonmetro Blacks in the eastern South now live in areas with conditions favoring growth—and presumably economic opportunity. But in Black-populated areas of the western South, conditions are still widely unfavorable for retention or attraction of people.

The Shifting Patterns of Black Migration Into and From the Nonmetropolitan South, 1965-95

Glenn V. Fuguitt, John A. Fulton, and Calvin L. Beale

Introduction

Since 1970, there has been a reversal of the long-standing trend of Black migration loss from the South. Following a net loss of almost 300,000 Blacks in the second half of the 1960s, the South had a small net gain in 1970-75, which increased to over 100,000 in 1975-80 and almost 200,000 in 1985-90. Then during 1990-95, the South had an unprecedented net inmovement of over 300,000 Blacks into the region (Frey, 1998).

The gains followed over a half century of losses, from the time of World War I when Blacks began moving north in greater numbers, with the war-time cut-off of immigrant workers from Europe, to about 1970. The departure of Blacks from the South was particularly strong during 1940-70. One study estimates the total net Black outmigration for this 30-year period at over 4 million, or about one in four of the average U.S. Black population over the period (Long, 1988). (Other studies of this period's heavy Black movement from the South include Beale, 1971; Farley and Allen, 1987; Fligstein, 1983; Hamilton, 1964; Johnson and Campbell, 1981; and Lemann, 1991.)

The subsequent reversal of this trend, beginning in the 1970s and continuing to the present, has resulted in much research on the volume and character of the flows between southern and nonsouthern regions, States, and metropolitan (metro) areas (e.g., Frey, 1998; McHugh, 1987; Robinson, 1986, 1990; Farley and Allen, 1987). One study contends that the trend of net inmigration since 1970 has contributed to the redistribution of Blacks down the metro hierarchy in the South to favor smaller metro areas (Johnson and Grant, 1997). Yet relatively few studies have focused on the nonmetropolitan (nonmetro) aspects of this migration, even though a fourth of all southern Blacks still lived in nonmetro areas in 1990. Studies touching on the nonmetro aspects of Black migration for post-1970 periods are Cromartie and Stack (1989), Pfeffer (1992), and Aratame and Singelmann (1998). Each study shows that although much of the historic South-to-North migration stream came from the rural South, the new trend of reverse inmigration has been primarily directed to southern metro areas.

Regional migration patterns have been connected to changes in economic development. That is, the South—and especially its rural areas—historically lagged behind the Northeast and Midwest in industrialization and income, but recent decades have seen increased southern economic growth. As this growth improved personal prospects, fewer people may have felt it necessary to leave the region, seeking instead newly prosperous metro destinations within the South. The same economic development also made the South more attractive to potential migrants from other regions. This was a major factor leading to the region's transition in net migration from loss to gain, first for the White population in the 1960s and then for the Black population in the 1970s.

A major noneconomic factor often cited as a reason for the Black migration turnaround is the decline of overt racial discrimination in the South, following the extension of voting rights to Blacks and the ending of legally sanctioned segregation. But little research has been done to examine the importance of reduced discrimination as an explanation for Black migration trends, and we would expect the effect of less discrimination to be on the South as a whole, rather than just the rural portions. More attention has been given to the significance of family ties, especially in return migration. Several studies have incorporated the state-of-birth variable from the Census into migration analysis (e.g., Long and Hansen, 1977, and Newbold, 1997). Another study demonstrated that in addition to return migrants themselves, many newcomers were children or spouses of return migrants (Cromartie and Stack, 1989). As is true for other groups, linked migration

through family ties and other associations is an important part of the contemporary Black migration process (Lee and Roseman, 1997). Data limitations in this study, however, prevent a direct consideration of these factors, although they need to be kept in mind in considering our findings. Family ties, for example, may induce migration to nonmetro areas, despite the lower typical level of nonmetro economic opportunities.

When Aratame and Singelmann compared the 1975-90 migration of Blacks and Whites for metro and nonmetro areas of the South, their general finding was that areas with a high proportion of Black population attracted more Blacks than Whites. Thus, migration trends of that period within the South and between the South and other regions resulted in an increased concentration of Blacks within certain metro and nonmetro areas. A consideration of migration for individual areas is beyond the scope of this paper, but we did examine post-1990 population trends in nonmetro areas with high Black concentration and compared the more rapidly growing South Atlantic States with the rest of the South.

This report examines trends in Black migration between the South and the remainder of the Nation from the period just before the Black migration reversal (1965-70) through 1990-95. We distinguish between nonmetro and metro areas within the South for these interregional moves and also consider migration between the metro and nonmetro South. For comparison, we examine migration trends for the non-Black population, more than 90 percent of which is White.

To gauge the consequences of Black migration for areas of origin and destination, we identify differences by poverty status and level of education among migrants and nonmigrants. We also present results separately for the South Atlantic States and the rest of the South. We do so because we viewed Black-inhabited areas of the western half of the South to be generally less prosperous than those in the South Atlantic region and thus possibly subject to different demographic trends. Finally, we report on 1990-2000 Black population trends for nonmetro counties with a high concentration of Blacks.

What findings might we expect? First, given the strong economic development in the South, particularly in activities that are urban and metro based, we would expect that the majority of the increased Black migration to the South—both absolutely and proportionally—would go to metro areas. Similarly, we would expect that the destination of outmigrant nonmetro Blacks would shift somewhat away from the North and West to southern metro areas. More exact trends over time, however, are less obvious and worth noting. Economic growth has not been constant. The early to mid-1980s was a time of recession and restructuring, particularly in the North, with heavy loss of manufacturing jobs. Trends in nonmetro population growth and migration went through transitions of turnaround (the 1970s), followed by reversal (the 1980s) and rebound (1990s). These shifts, however, primarily affected the White population and were not characteristic of Blacks (Lichter et al., 1985; Cromartie and Beale, 1996).

In regard to the character of the flows, Nord contends that, despite the expectation that disadvantaged populations do not move as much as others, there is an active migration interchange of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups, which supports the concentration of the disadvantaged in certain areas (Nord, 1998a, 1998b). Applying this finding for the general population to our research, we would expect that the movements of Blacks—both those with low education and in poverty, and those having higher education and income—would support the continued concentration of people of low education or poverty-level income in southern nonmetro areas.

Data

We used special U.S. Census county-to-county migration files for 1965-70, 1975-80, and 1985-90. For each migration interval, our variables were race (Black, non-Black), region, and 1993 metro status of origin and destination.[1] For 1985-90, we obtained education and poverty status as well, for the ending year.

We also used a custom tabulation of 1990-95 migration data from the March 1995 Current Population Survey (CPS). Although the CPS sample size makes it prudent to consider only aggregate metro-nonmetro and regional migration trends, the survey provided data on the post-1990 Census period in which Black regional migration trends appear to have accelerated.

Because of the 5-year migration data intervals, most of our tabulations are for persons age 5 years and older at the time of the Census or the CPS. Education data, however, are restricted to persons age 25 years and over, thereby excluding most people who have not yet completed their formal schooling.

[1] Although the special Census Bureau inter-county migration file for 1990 included data on both migrants and nonmigrants, the 1970 and 1980 files had data on migrants only. To derive the expected populations for migration rates for 1965-70 and 1975-80, it was necessary to estimate the nonmovers for 1970 and 1980 by subtracting movers from the appropriate total population age 5 and over by race and sex, as obtained from Census summary tape files.

Our basic data are migration streams, that is, the populations moving between various origins and destinations. Thus, we can consider both in- and outmigration as well as net movement, which is important for understanding processes of migration change.

We must be somewhat cautious in assessing the linkage of poverty or education with migration rates because we do not know what the levels of income and schooling were before migration. Impoverished persons may succeed in raising their income after they move and before the time of the Census. And some persons may complete college between the time of their move and the Census. So it is not entirely valid to assume that the post-migration poverty and education levels of movers would be the same had these individuals not moved. But it is informative to consider the degree of educational or poverty replacement experienced by a residence group through migration, that is, the extent to which the education or income poverty level already achieved or subsequently acquired by those who leave is replaced by those who come in (Voss and Fuguitt, 1991).

Because our major interest is in the more recent migration trends, we use a constant metro-nonmetro boundary delineation based on the 1990 Census. The results would be somewhat different had we used the nonmetro delineation current at each time period. The major trends, however, should be the same (Fuguitt, Heaton, and Lichter, 1988).

Recent Black Migration Change

The net inmovement of Blacks to the South began in the 1970s and has since become more pronounced in each data period up to the present. In 1965-70, prior to the migration turnaround, both metro and nonmetro areas in the South were losing Black migrants in their exchange with other regions, but the rate of loss was twice as great for nonmetro areas as for metro areas (fig. 1). By 1975-80, metro net migration had reversed to a positive rate of over 1 percent, and the nonmetro net rate was just less than 0 percent. Although this initial transition was greater in nonmetro areas than in metro areas, in the time periods to follow, metro areas gained progressively more migrants than they lost, whereas nonmetro areas continued to have nearly balanced migration, with essentially a zero rate of net movement with the North and West.

The first panel of table 1 gives the gross in- and outmigration rates along with net migration for both metro and nonmetro areas of the South. As the denominator is common for each residence, that is, the expected population had there been no migration, the in-rate minus the out-rate equals the net rate in each instance.

The marked increase in both metro and nonmetro net migration seen in figure 1 across the first two time periods (1965-70 and 1975-80) was due both to the decline of outmovement to the North and West and an increase of inmovement from the same region. Across the other two time periods (1975-80 and 1985-90; 1985-90 and 1990-95), the relative contribution of the components varied. For both residence groups, however, the out-rate from the South to the North and West dropped substantially across the 30-year period. This rate was about 30 percent higher for nonmetro areas than for metro areas in 1965-70, but the metro and nonmetro rates were about equal for the other three time periods. On the other hand, inmigration relative to the expected population was always higher for metro areas than for nonmetro areas in the South, and was more than twice as large by 1990-95. Of all Black inmigrants to the South from the North and West, 23 percent went to nonmetro counties in 1965-70, but only 10 percent did so in 1990-95.

The second panel of table 1 concerns another important migration flow that needs to be distinguished and deserves scrutiny. That flow is the one between metro and nonmetro areas of the South. Both before and after

Figure 1
Net migration rates for Blacks in the South by residence: Interchange with the North and West, 1965-95

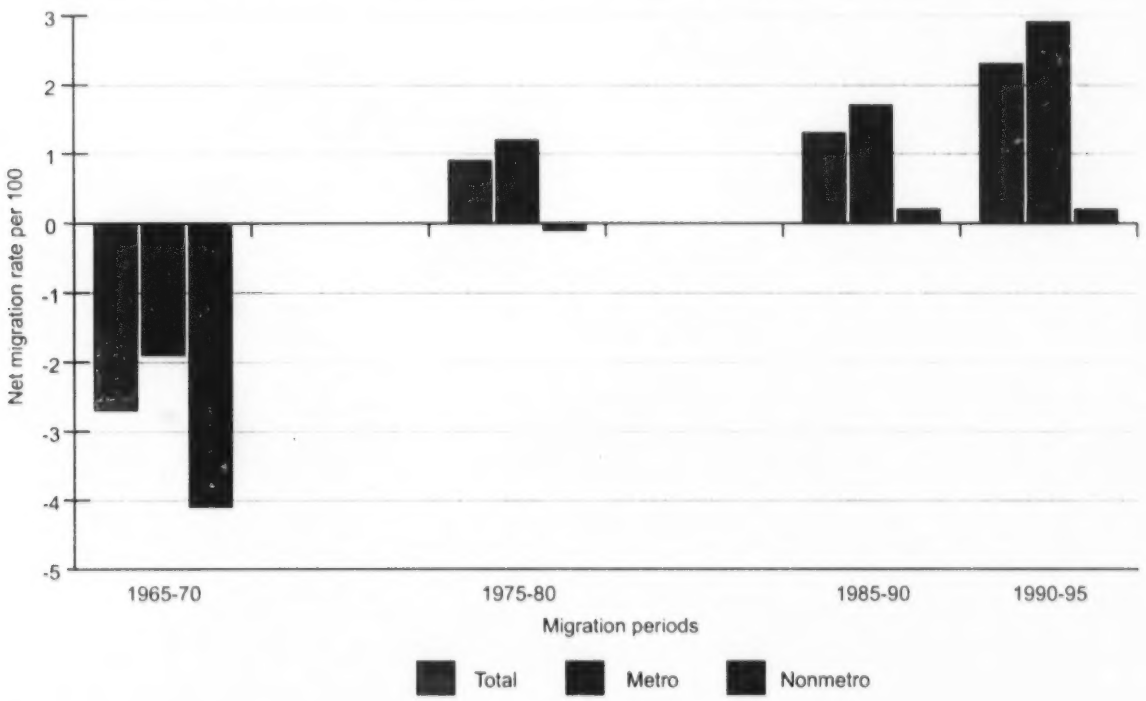


Table 1 - Migration rates per 100 for Blacks in the South, 1965-70, 1975-80, 1985-90, 1990-95

Migration stream	1965-70	1975-80	1985-90	1990-95
		Percent		
Interchange with the North and West				
Metro South:				
In from North and West	2.2	3.8	4.5	4.4
Out to North and West	4.1	2.6	2.8	1.6
Net migration	-1.9	1.2	1.7	2.8
Nonmetro South:				
In from North and West	1.3	2.7	2.6	1.7
Out to North and West	5.4	2.8	2.4	1.5
Net migration	-4.1	-0.1	0.2	0.2
Interchange—Metro-nonmetro in the South				
Metro South:				
In from nonmetro	3.1	2.6	2.7	2.9
Out to nonmetro	1.5	1.6	1.9	2.8
Net migration	1.6	1.0	0.8	0.1
Nonmetro South:				
In from metro	3.0	4.0	5.3	9.6
Out to metro	6.3	6.5	7.5	9.9
Net migration	-3.3	-2.5	-2.2	-0.3
Total				
Metro South:				
In total	5.3	6.4	7.2	7.3
Out total	5.5	4.2	4.7	4.4
Net migration	-0.2	2.2	2.5	2.9
Nonmetro South:				
In total	4.3	6.7	8.0	11.3
Out total	11.7	9.3	9.9	11.4
Net migration	-7.4	-2.6	-1.9	-0.1

the transition to Black inmigration from other regions, there was a strong process of metropolitanization within the South. The region was well behind the rest of the Nation in this regard at the close of World War II but then began to catch up. The metro and nonmetro sections in the table's second panel have a reciprocal relation. Thus, over the four time periods, as the net migration loss for nonmetro gets smaller, the net gain for metro declines as well.

The second panel also illustrates the importance of considering migration components, particularly for nonmetro areas. Although nonmetro net migration loss declined from -3.3 per 100 to -0.3 per 100, both in- and outmigration rates increased considerably over the 30-year period. The decline in migration loss is due to the fact that the inmigration to nonmetro locations from southern metro areas rose considerably more than the nonmetro outmigration to the metro South. By 1990-95, both the in- and the outmigration rates were a little less than 3 per 100 for the metro South and a little less than 10 per 100 for the nonmetro South.

Because of the smaller base population on the nonmetro side, a given number of migrants results in higher migration rates for nonmetro areas than for metro areas. Also, because of the smaller nonmetro base, the metro-to-nonmetro migration has a bigger relative impact on the nonmetro population, with both in- and outmigration being almost 10 percent of the nonmetro expected population by 1990-95.

Although we must be careful in interpreting the CPS results because of limited sample size, they indicate

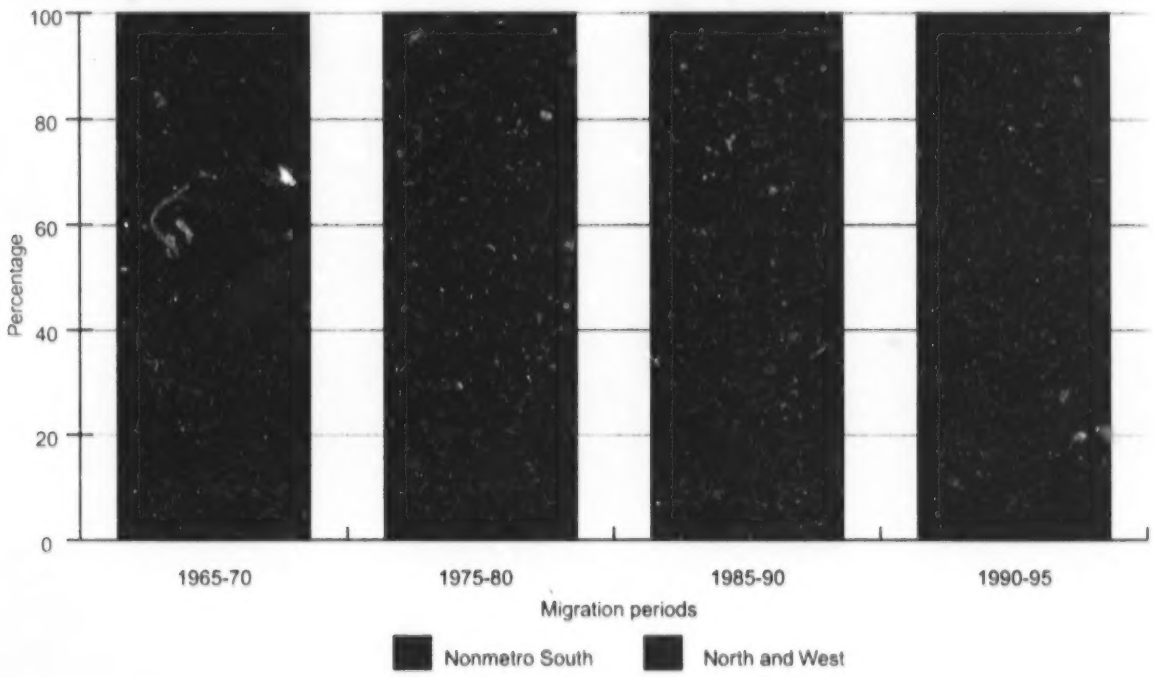
that with in- and outmovement rates almost equal there is now a large mutual interchange of Blacks between metro and nonmetro areas. In previous periods, by contrast, movement to southern metro areas was an important component of net migration loss from the nonmetro population.

The third panel of table 1 summarizes the overall migration trend. When the first two panels are combined, both metro and nonmetro areas show a positive trend in net migration, with metro rates increasing from -0.2 to 2.9 per 100, and nonmetro loss almost ending, falling from -7.4 to -0.1. For metro areas, the inmigration rate generally increased across each time interval, just as the outmigration rate declined. For nonmetro areas, the inmigration rate went up systematically from more than 4 per 100 to more than 11 per 100. The outmigration total, on the other hand, dropped between the first two periods but then increased again. This unusual pattern is due to the fact that although the outmigration rate from nonmetro to the North and West has consistently dropped, the outmigration to southern metro areas has steadily grown. As a consequence, the overall outmigration rate for Blacks in 1965-70, a time when so many Blacks were still leaving the nonmetro South for the North, was essentially the same as that for 1990-95, when almost all of the outmigration was directed to the metro South.

In absolute numbers, this nonmetro outmovement totaled more than 400,000 migrants during the migration intervals discussed from 1965-70 through 1990-95, but the dominant destinations were different. Further, between these intervals the number of nonmetro inmigrants jumped from 150,000 to 400,000. The result was a net loss of more than 250,000 migrants from nonmetro areas in 1965-70, but essentially no loss or gain in 1990-95.

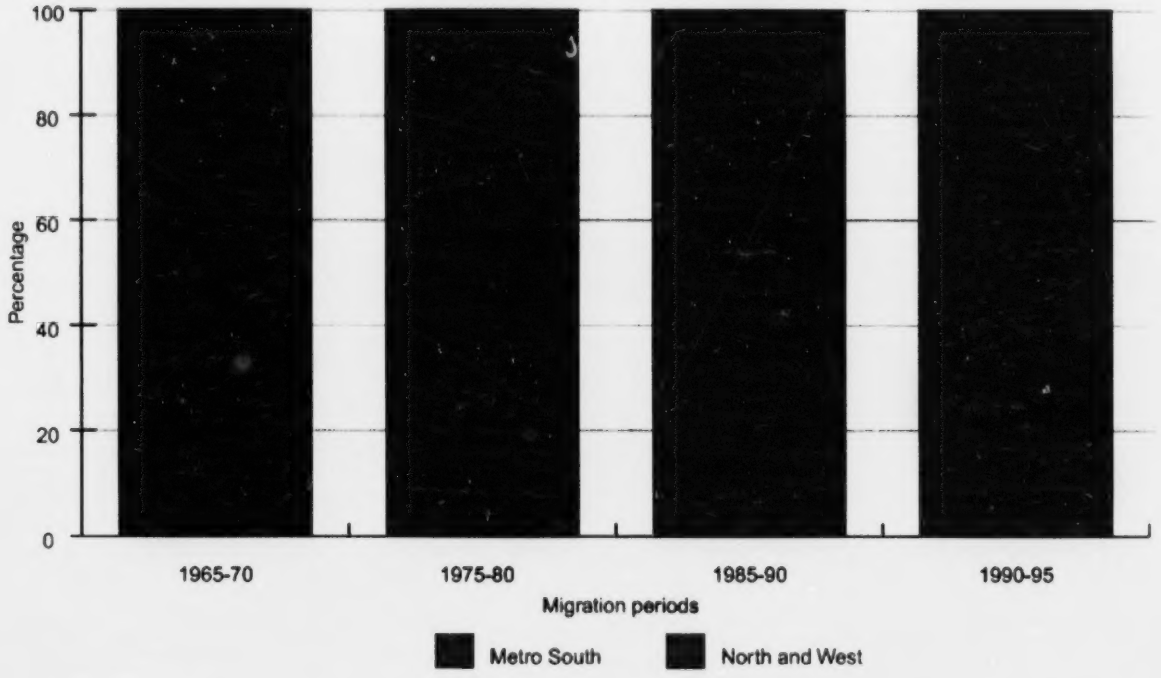
The increasing importance of the metro-nonmetro interchange within the South is shown by comparing the relative choice of destination for outmigrants from each southern residence group, distinguishing whether they chose northern and western or southern destinations. Although less than 30 percent of outmigrants from the metro South moved to the nonmetro South in 1965-70, and more than 70 percent went to the North and West, by 1990-95 about 63 percent chose the nonmetro South as their destination (fig. 2a). Somewhat more than half of the outmigrants from the nonmetro

Figure 2a
Destinations of outmigrants from metro South, 1965-95



South shifted to the metro South in 1965-70, rather than move to the North and West, but almost 90 percent of nonmetro outmigrants chose the metro South in 1990-95 (fig. 2b). Clearly, the migration interaction for Blacks between metro and nonmetro residence areas in the South became much more dominant than the remaining interchange with the North and West.

Figure 2b
Destinations of outmigrants from nonmetro South, 1965-95



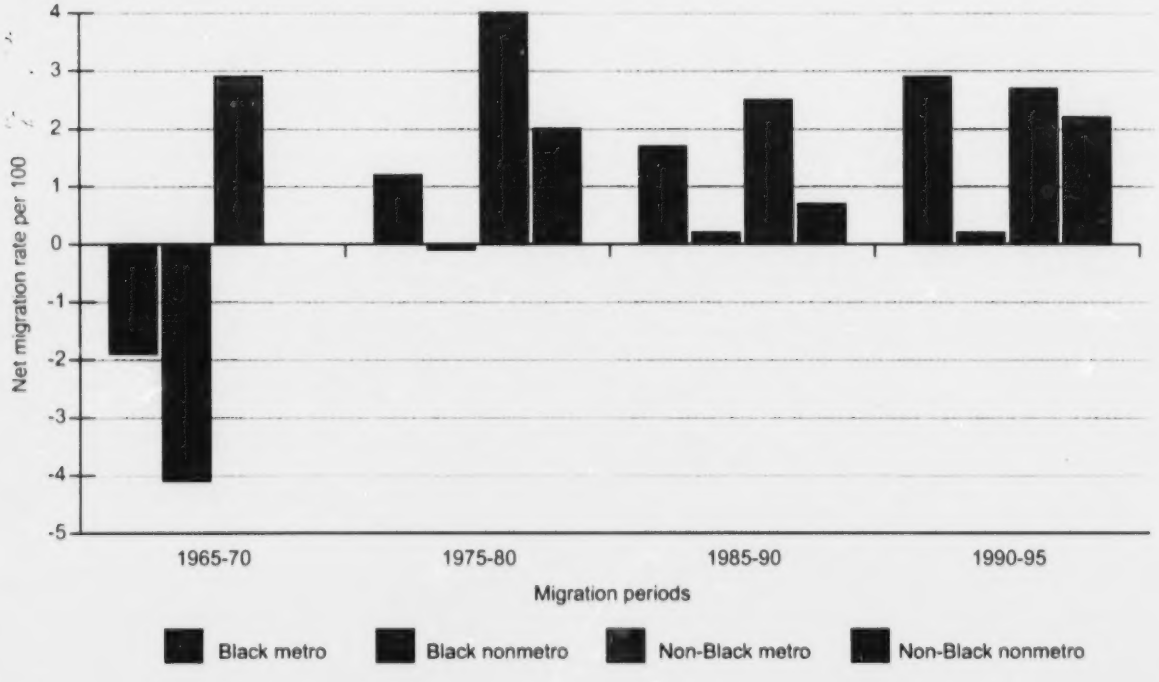
Blacks Compared With Others

Although the U.S. non-Black population has become more diverse over recent decades, 95 percent of it was classified as White in the 1990 Census (whether or not it was also Hispanic). This report focuses on Black migration trends, but it is important to determine whether the trends for Blacks are similar to or distinct from those also found in the balance of the Nation's population, which is predominantly White. Consistent with conclusions from other works noted previously, our findings demonstrate that Black trends in southern metro-nonmetro migration are not just derivative of those found in the non-Black majority (Lichter et al., 1985; Cromartie and Beale, 1996).

Figure 3a shows migration interrelations between the South and the North and West combined for the Black and non-Black populations. Although the southern net migration gain for metro Blacks with respect to the North and West did not begin until 1975-80, this transition was already under way for non-Blacks in 1965-70. Unlike the metro rates for Blacks, which increased in each interval, non-Black migration to the North and West peaked in 1975-80, and was followed by lower levels of gain in the ensuing period. As a consequence, there has been a Black/non-Black convergence in southern metro net migration with the North and West. By 1990-95, the metro net inmigration rate for Blacks surpassed that of non-Blacks for the first time.

Nonmetro differences between Blacks and non-Blacks are even more striking. Blacks had a balanced in- and out- nonmetro migration (that is, nearly zero net migration) from 1975-80 through 1995. Non-Blacks, however, had the "turnaround-reversal-rebound" sequence of nonmetro migration gain after 1970 that applied to the Nation as a whole and not simply to the South's interchange with the North and West (e.g., Fuguitt and Beale, 1996; Johnson and Beale, 1998). The initial nonmetro turnaround pattern is seen in comparing 1965-70 with 1975-80; the reversal by comparing 1975-80 with 1985-90, and the rebound by comparing 1985-90 with 1990-95. The emergence of this changing pattern as a part of interregional migration should reflect the importance of retirement and recreation-based movement to the South, with individuals often drawn by perceived advantages in amenities and climate. But, there is no evidence here that climate and amenities have yet become important factors in

Figure 3a
Net migration rates for Blacks and non-Blacks in the South by residence: Interchange with the North and West, 1965-95

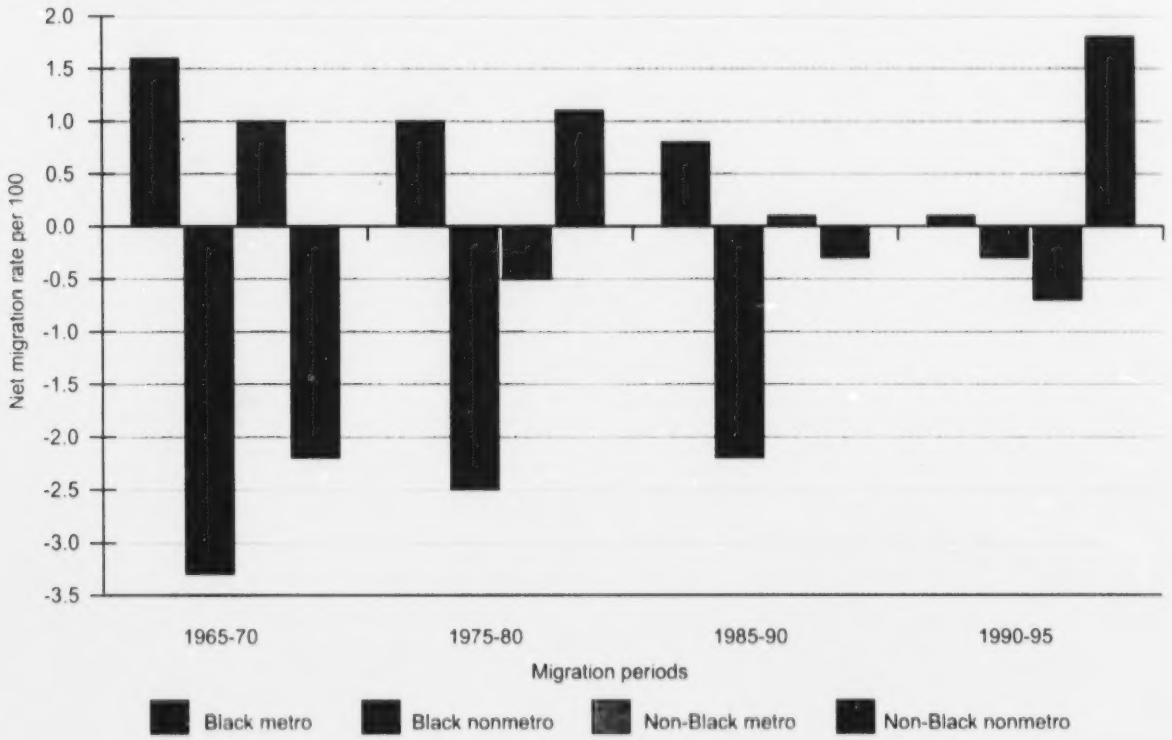


the interregional relocation of Blacks. Some of the Black movement to the South is now by persons not native to the region but drawn by economic opportunity or job relocation. Other Blacks moving in are returning natives with family ties.

The metro-nonmetro interchange within the South is shown for both Blacks and non-Blacks in figure 3b. The pattern for Blacks (also shown in table 1) is a declining net migration loss across periods for nonmetro areas, with a complementary declining net migration gain for metro areas, so that by 1990-95 there is a slightly negative nonmetro rate and a slightly positive metro rate. Non-Black migration within the South, however, shows a turnaround-reversal-rebound sequence for nonmetro areas, with a notable net migration gain in 1975-80 and 1990-95. Because of the complementary nature of metro-nonmetro migration rates within the South, there are negative metro rates in the periods of highest nonmetro migration gain (1975-80, 1990-95) and positive metro rates in the periods of lowest nonmetro gain (1965-70, 1985-90).

Rates are somewhat lower in the interchange within the South than they are for the interchange between regions, but the pattern is nevertheless clear. Our analysis reveals that this non-Black trend, seen at the national level, is also found in the South on both an interregional and a more localized basis. But neither the between-region nor the within-region comparison shows any evidence of the Black pattern following these ups and downs of migration gain over the period considered.

Figure 3b
Migration rates for Blacks and non-Blacks in the South: Metro-nonmentro interchange, 1965-95



Characteristics of Migration Streams

The 1990 Census is still the most recent reliable source of regional information on the characteristics of the migrants. Although in principle it would be possible to tabulate the CPS migration data for characteristics of nonmetro Blacks by origin and destination of move, in practice the resulting sampling variation would be too large to yield reliable results.

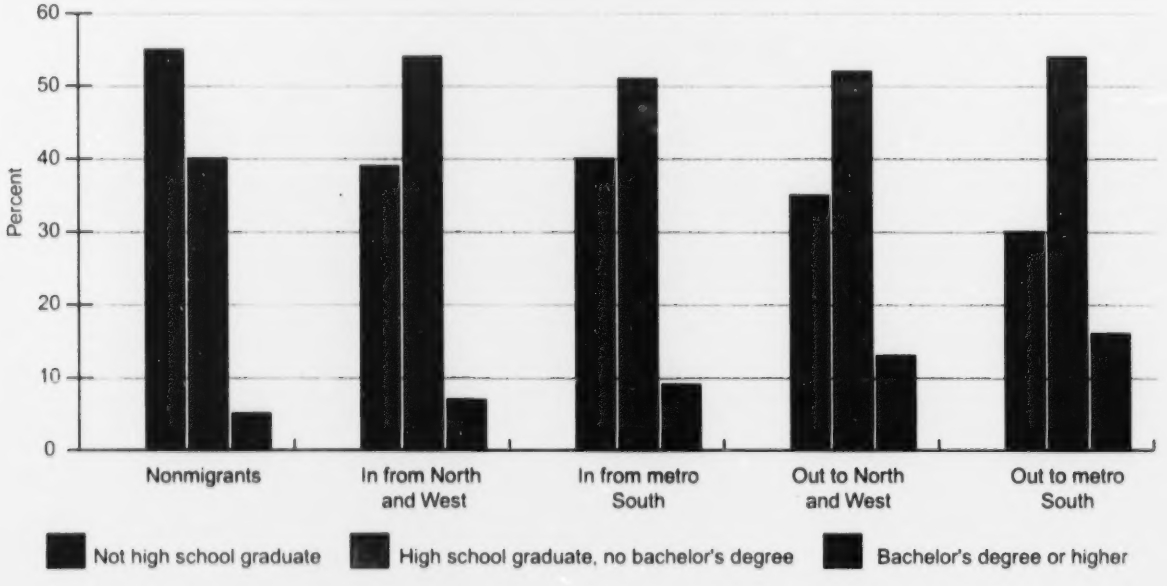
Instead, we used the county-to-county matrix of 1985-90 decennial census migration data by race, education, and poverty status. These data help tell us (1) whether the growing addition of persons of southern metro background to the nonmetro areas enhances the educational and income composition of rural and small-town Blacks, and (2) whether migrants to the cities represent a drain of the better educated and more prosperous rural people.

Educational Level

We examined the educational levels of nonmetro persons age 25 and over, distinguishing those moving either between the nonmetro South and the North and West or between the nonmetro South and the metro South. We also considered the remaining population, which we term nonmigrants, although this group includes those who moved between homes within the southern nonmetro residence category. Figure 4 shows the proportions of nonmetro Blacks by migration status who reported their education to be (1) less than high school graduate, (2) high school graduate but no bachelor's degree, and (3) bachelor's degree or higher.

Nonmigrants have the lowest educational status, that is, the lowest proportion of college graduates and the highest proportion of persons who did not finish high school. This finding is not surprising, since nonmigrants are older, on average, and older people tend to have lower levels of education than other age groups. Moreover, much previous research on migration and education has shown that migrants in general tend to have more education than nonmigrants (e.g., Cromartie, Gibbs, and Nord, 1999). Comparing the inmigrant educational levels with those for outmigrants reveals that the migration interchange with both the North and West and the metro South led to a net loss of those with higher education levels in nonmetro areas. The highest educational status among the migration streams is that of Blacks moving from the nonmetro South to southern metro areas in the 1985-90 period. Similar findings were reported for a delineation of southern nonmetro plantation counties for the 1985-90 period (Pfeffer, 1992).

Figure 4
Educational composition in 1990 of Blacks age 25 and over, southern nonmetro migration streams, 1985-90



In absolute numbers, the nonmetro South sent twice as many college graduates to the North and West and to southern metro areas combined than it received in return in 1985-90 (table 2). This is a major educational difference, but it accords with our expectations, given the far greater opportunities for college graduates to pursue careers in urban settings. At the opposite end of the education scale, the difference is not as strong, but nonmetro Southern areas acquired almost 11 percent more Black migrants who had not finished high school than the areas lost in their exchanges with the North and West and the metro South categories combined. Part of this difference probably represents an older average age (which would be associated with low education) among those returning from other areas—some of whom are of retirement age. Nevertheless, it shows that an important consequence of the migration process for nonmetro Blacks of both low and high levels of education is to lessen gains in the overall educational status of the Black population in the nonmetro South (Nord, 1998a).

In all streams of Black migration either to or from nonmetro southern areas or between the South and the rest of the country, people with less than a high school education were two to five times as numerous as college graduates, a measure of just how low the level of education is for many Blacks entering or leaving rural areas and small towns. (For the total U.S. population age 25 and over in 1990, those who had not finished high school were 1.2 times as numerous as college graduates.) All told, in the 1985-90 period, the nonmetro South had a net loss of 14,000 Black college graduates and a net gain of 6,000 migrants who were not high school graduates. The net loss of college graduates amounted to 10 percent of the total Black graduate population that would have been present in the nonmetro South in the absence of migration, a considerable loss in just 5 years. This loss is probably the most significant educational impact of the migration pattern for nonmetro Blacks. The estimate of human capital loss, moreover, is likely to be somewhat low, since it is typical for many college students to have moved away before age 25.

Poverty Status

In its interchange with other areas, the nonmetro South received more Blacks from 1985-90 who lived in households with poverty-level incomes in 1989 (as reported in the 1990 Census) than it sent elsewhere. Specifically, 41 percent of all Blacks moving in from the North and West were poor, along with 39 percent of those coming from the metro South (fig. 5). This level of impoverishment is no lower than that among nonmetro Blacks who did not migrate (39 percent). Thus, the nonmetro South did not experience a reduction in Black poverty from the inflow of people from the North and West or the metro South.

Table 2 – Nonmetro Black migrants in the South by educational status, 1985-90[1]

Education	In	Out	Net gain for nonmetro South	In/out
		Number		*Ratio*
Less than high school:				
North and West	20,504	15,654	4,850	1.31
Metro South	43,760	42,214	1,546	1.04
Total	64,264	57,868	6,396	1.11
High school, less than bachelor's degree:				
North and West	29,341	24,444	4,897	1.20
Metro South	54,574	74,504	-19,930	0.73
Total	83,915	98,948	-15,033	0.85
Bachelor's degree or higher:				
North and West	3,992	5,816	-1,824	0.69
Metro South	9,842	21,861	-12,019	0.45
Total	13,838	27,677	-13,843	0.50
Total age 25 and over in 1990:				
North and West	53,837	45,914	7,923	1.17
Metro South	108,176	138,574	-30,403	0.78
Total	162,013	184,493	-22,480	0.87

[1] Population age 25 and over.

Those who left nonmetro communities had lower levels of poverty in their new settings than those who remained (34 percent poverty among migrants who went to the North and West, 30 percent for migrants to the metro South, and 39 percent for nonmigrants). But one cannot say how much the migrants' incomes reported in the 1990 Census were affected by change occurring after they moved, given the 5-year full length and 2.5-year average length of the migration period studied. In any event, the macro poverty consequence by 1990 was small. The metro South, for example, acquired only 13,000 more poor people from the disproportionate poverty of Black rural inmigrants on a base population of over 9 million (table 3). Black migrants to the metro South from the North and West had higher incomes (as reflected by lower poverty rates) than the Black nonmigrant population of the metro South (data not shown), but figure 5 shows that Black migrants to the nonmetro South from the same regions had a poverty rate that was even a little higher than that of nonmigrants.

Figure 5
Poverty composition in 1989 of Black migration streams for nonmetro southern areas, 1985-90

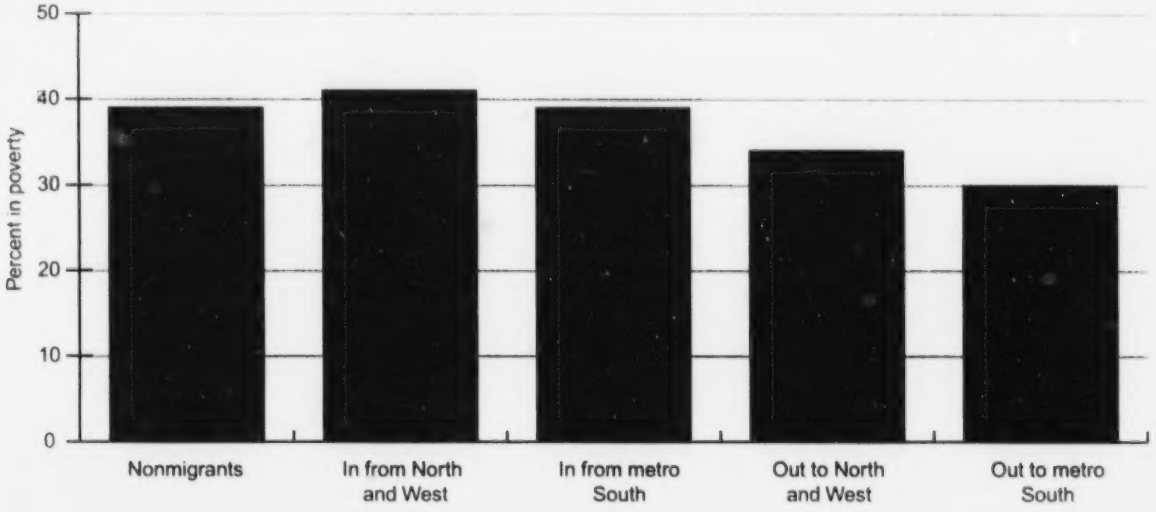


Table 3 – Nonmetro Black migrants in the South by poverty status, 1985-90[1]

Status	In	Out	Net gain to nonmetro South	In/out
		Number		*Ratio*
In poverty:				
North and West	34,980	26,201	8,779	1.34
Metro South	53,529	66,809	13,280	0.80
Total	88,509	93,010	-4,501	0.95
Not in poverty:				
North and West	49,976	51,314	-1,338	0.97
Metro South	81,763	157,542	-75,779	0.52
Total	131,739	208,856	-77,177	0.63

[1] Poverty status was determined only for population in households.

The South Atlantic States and the Rest of the South Compared

In comparing migration trends among the regions of the South, we expected lower net migration decline or higher growth for Blacks in the South Atlantic States than for Blacks in the generally less prosperous nonmetro parts of the "Other South."[2] This proved partly but not consistently true (fig. 6a). The results for 1965-70 are as expected, with net migration loss in all categories but greater loss for nonmetro than metro and greater loss for the Other South States than for the South Atlantic. For 1975-80, however, the South as a whole had an appreciable overall increase in the level of net migration, with essentially zero net migration on the nonmetro side in both geographic subregions, instead of earlier loss (fig. 1). But the level of metro net migration gain was higher in the Other South than in the South Atlantic States.

The results for 1985-90 are more consistent with 1965-70 and anticipate the population change pattern for 1990-2000. That is, the net migration gain from the North and West to the South Atlantic States is higher for both metro and nonmetro areas. Indeed, in the 1985-90 period the Other South had a slightly negative interchange with the North and West. Our earlier analysis for the South as a whole had shown there was essentially no net migration gain from the North and West for nonmetro Blacks even by 1985-90 (fig. 1). This result is a balancing of notable net inmigration from the North and West to the nonmetro South Atlantic with outmigration to the North and West from the nonmetro Other South (fig. 6a).

The migration interchange between the metro and nonmetro South reflects a higher level of metropolitanization in the Other South than in the South Atlantic States (fig. 6b). That is, for each of the three periods, nonmetro loss and complementary metro gain was

[2] The South Atlantic States include Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia, along with the District of Columbia. The remainder of the South, which for convenience we call "Other South," includes Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas.

Figure 6a
Net migration rates for Blacks in South Atlantic and Other South: Interchange with North and West, 1965-90

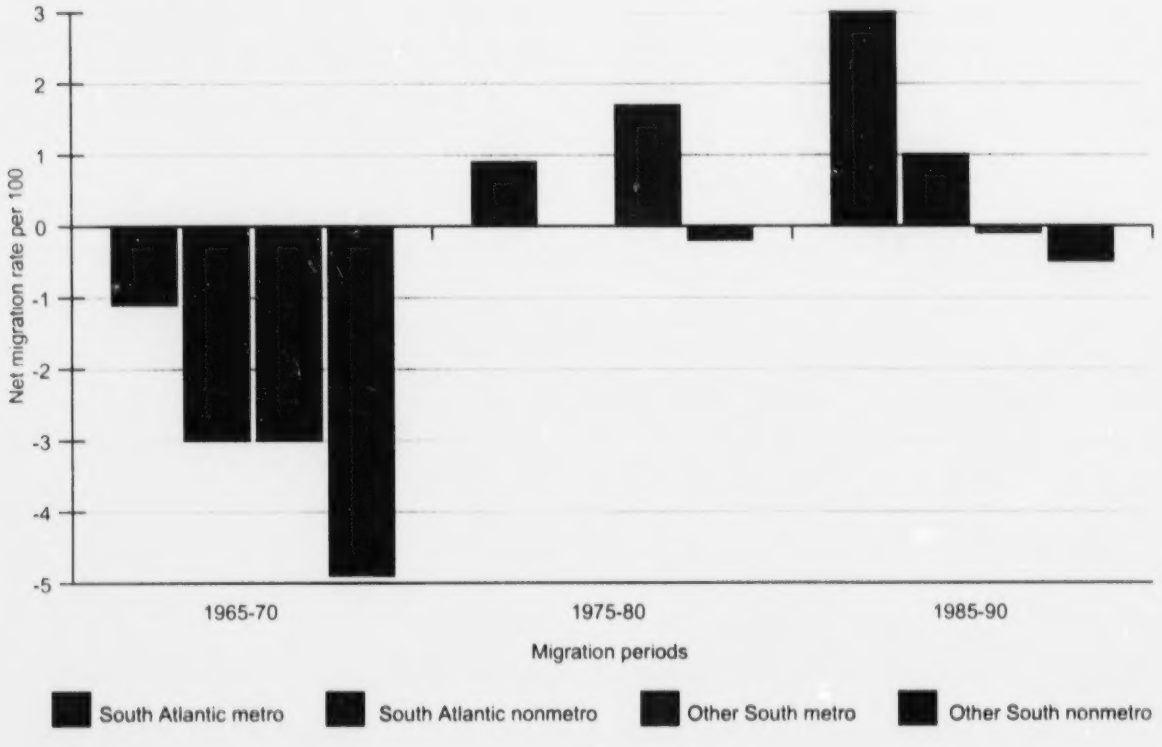
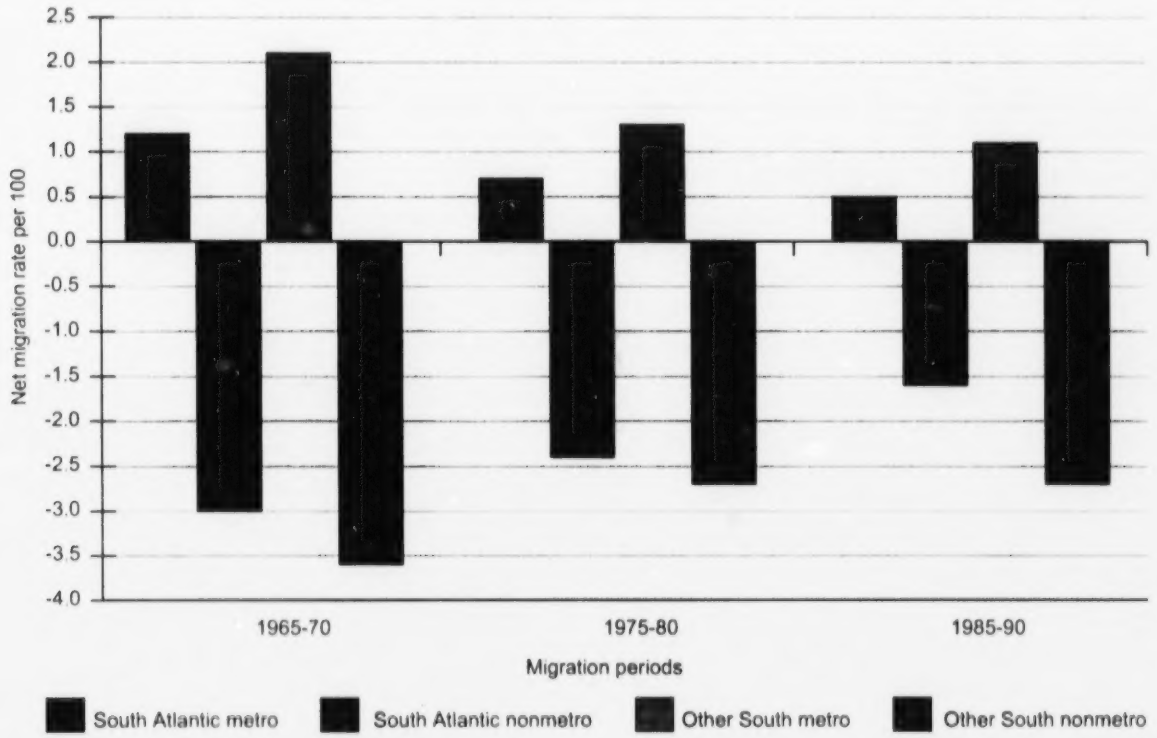


Figure 6b
Net migration rates for Blacks, South Atlantic and Other South: Metro-nonmetro interchange in South, 1965-90



higher in the Other South States. Over time, however, metropolitanization of migration slowed down, with declining metro gain and declining nonmetro loss across each time period. This finding mirrors the decline shown previously for the South as a whole (table 1).

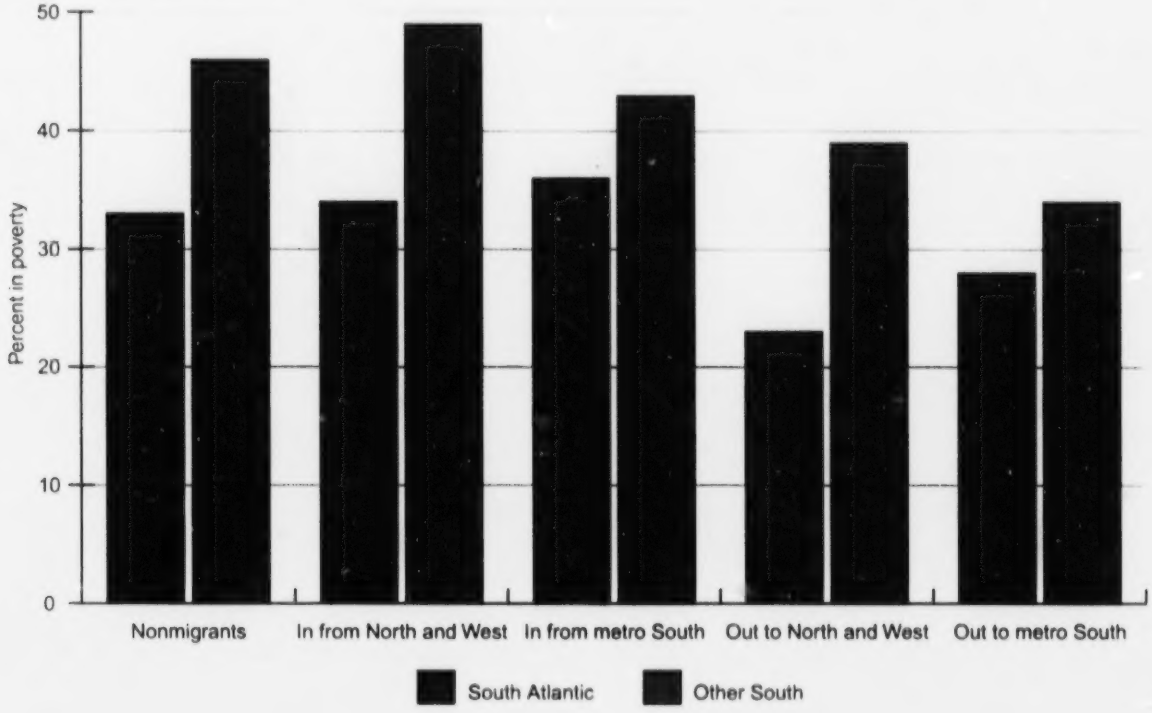
By 1985-90, then, the South Atlantic States were having (a) the higher net migration gain for metro areas and the only net migration gain for nonmetro areas in the interchange with the North and West, and (b) the lower level of metropolitanization in the metro-nonmetro interchange with the South. That is, for Blacks, the eastern seaboard moved toward a pattern more similar to that for Whites, in terms of a more balanced metro-nonmetro interchange and nonmetro growth from migration.

One might expect these subregional differences to be associated with distinct patterns in terms of the socioeconomic characteristics of migration streams. The subregional difference in educational levels, however, proves minimal (1-2 percentage points) for each stream. Each subregion followed the education differentials found in the entire South (fig. 4).

On the other hand, a consistent subregional difference is found with the incidence of poverty. The South Atlantic States have a lower proportion in poverty across the migration streams and in the nonmigrant group (fig. 7). This finding accords with expectations, given the higher levels of overall population and economic growth in the South Atlantic States than in the rest of the South. As is true of the overall South, however, migration has raised poverty levels in the nonmetro areas of both subregions, with the inmigrants having higher poverty proportions than the outmigrants in 1990. Migrants from the nonmetro South to the North and West and those from the North and West to the nonmetro South are distinctive in showing the greatest difference in poverty levels between the South Atlantic and the Other South. That is, the interchange between the North and West and the South Atlantic States was considerably less likely to include persons in poverty than that for the Other South. Almost half of the migrants from the North and West to the Other

Figure 7

Poverty composition in 1989 of Black migration streams, nonmetro areas of the South Atlantic and Other South States, 1985-90



South were classified as poor, compared with just a third of those moving to the South Atlantic States. A similar difference in poverty levels, though with lower percentages, exists for those moving from nonmetro areas to the North and West.

Because migration is measured from a date 5 years before the Census, and poverty status is determined for the last calendar year before the Census, poverty rates may not reflect the income of migrants at the time they moved. However, given the superior educational attainment of nonmetro outmigrants compared with inmigrants from the North and West, it seems unlikely that outmigrants would have been poorer than inmigrants at the time of move.

Black Population Trends in Southern Nonmetro Counties, 1990-2000

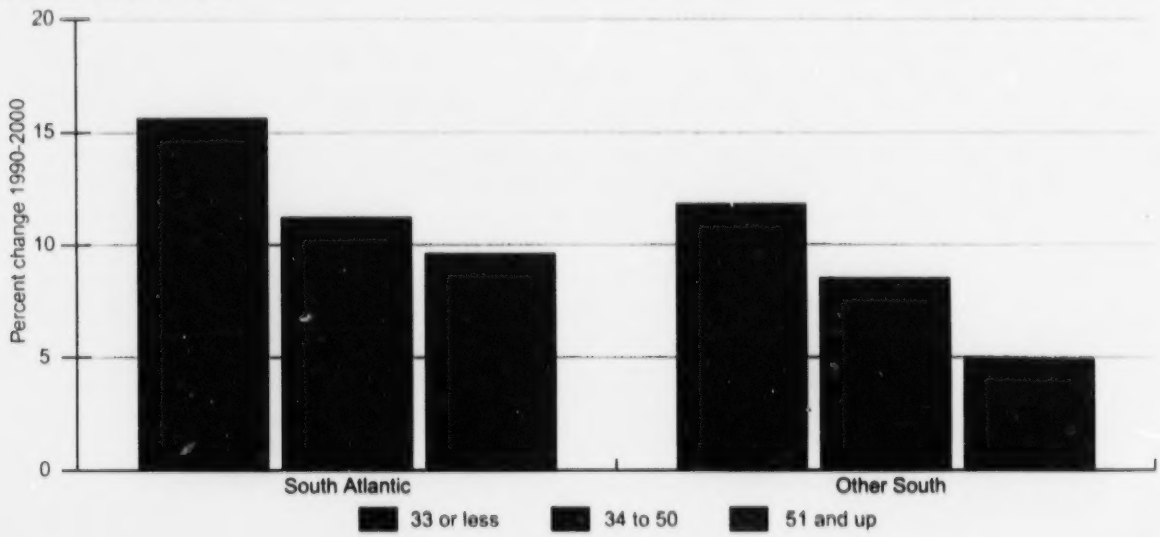
The analysis of Black migration trends since 1995 must await the availability of more detailed data from the 2000 Census of Population. By considering the early results of this most recent Census, however, we can examine overall 1990-2000 Black population change from net migration and surplus of births over deaths combined. We found that the larger the proportion of the county population Black in 1990, the lower the Black population growth in the next 10 years.[3] In nonmetro counties with Black majorities, the total population grew by slightly less than 7 percent, whereas growth was about 14 percent in counties where less than a third of the population was Black.

[3] In the Census of 2000, respondents were allowed to report being of more than one race, whereas only one race was reported in 1990. This change did not make much difference for our population, however, since only 1.5 percent of nonmetropolitan Blacks in the South reported more than one race in 2000. We counted as Blacks all persons who reported Black either as their sole race or in combination with one or more other races, for we think this probably conforms the closest to 1990 data. We also calculated the results including as Blacks in 2000 just those who reported Black as their only race. The patterns are virtually identical to those shown here for all persons reporting Black race, with the percentage changes about 1 to 3 points lower. In general, the percentage of multiple-race entries was noticeably highest in counties where Blacks are comparatively few in number.

We hypothesized a regional difference in this effect, because of the known deeper nature of poverty among Blacks in the South Central States than in the more vigorous economies of the South Atlantic region. This supposition proved correct, as figure 8 clearly shows. In the States west of Georgia, counties gained 9 percent overall in their Black population between 1990 and 2000, while counties in the South Atlantic States gained 13 percent. According to the bars in the figure, for each subregion the predominantly Black counties had lower growth than those that were less than one-third Black. (Differences are 10 versus 16 in the South Atlantic States and 5 versus 12 in the Other South). Thus, Black growth levels were associated with both region and racial composition. Of counties with a majority of Black residents, 11 that had absolute Black population decline were west of Georgia and 4 were in the South Atlantic States.

The contrast in trends indicates that Blacks in the Mississippi Valley and Alabama are in areas where conditions are still widely unfavorable to retention or acquisition of population and where the historic trend of outmovement is the least altered. In the eastern South, though, large numbers of rural and small-town Blacks live in areas that are now commonly being evaluated as attractive for employment and residence rather than as areas to leave.

Figure 8
Black percent change 1990-2000, nonmetro areas of the South Atlantic and Other South States, by county percent Black in 1990



Conclusion

The era since the culmination of the civil rights crisis and the mechanization of southern row-crop farming has seen a major decline in the propensity of rural Blacks to leave the South for the North and West, but with a simultaneous redirection of outflow to southern cities. Nearly the same gross amount of rural outflow took place from 1990-95 as from 1965-70, but while 46 percent of outflow left the South in the earlier period, only 13 percent did so in the 1990s. This change suggests a gradual attenuation of the strong personal ties that have existed between Blacks in the rural South and those in the North and West. The perceived advantages of southern metro residence, however, have grown over the years, as has the willingness of metro Black southerners to move into (or back to) rural districts.

The trend produced only a minimal overall net loss of nonmetro Blacks through outmovement in the first half of the 1990s, compared with a 7.4-percent loss in 1965-70. In demographic terms, the migration has become "ineffective," that is, with both inmovement and outmovement occurring, but little net change. The South is a large region, though, and the county-level data for 1990-2000 show strong subregional differences in population change. Decline in total population, stemming from continued outmovement, is still common in counties with significant Black populations in the western South, while growth and even inmovement have become the rule in the eastern South.

As expected, the nonmetro South exported more Black college graduates than it received. While such outmovement is rational, it can have a negative impact on the nonmetro population whose general educational level is low and whose educational opportunities were so limited in the past. The effect of this trend was compounded by the fact that the nonmetro Black population received more people with limited education than it lost.

Poverty levels of Black nonmetro residents remained very high in 1990 regardless of migration status. We were surprised to find that the poverty rates of the 400,000 Blacks who came into the nonmetro South from 1985-90 were as high as those of the nonmigrant population in 1990, indicating no nonmetro income benefit from the urban inflow, at least as measured by poverty incidence. The Black rural outflow to the metro areas is still somewhat disproportionately poor but is now very small as a percentage of the population of these areas and has much less current impact on metro population composition than immigration from abroad.

As noted earlier, our expectations were supported regarding changes in the overall structure of Black migration between the nonmetro South and both the North and West and the metro South. For nonmetro Blacks, the metro South has emerged as the major focus of population interchange, with high levels of both in- and outmigration.

Our findings concerning the educational and poverty levels of migrants show that movement both in and out of nonmetro areas supports a continuation of the disadvantaged social and economic status of Blacks in the rural and small-town South. These findings are consistent with other research (Nord 1998a, 1998b).

The nonmetro South is not monolithic. Rather, it is a large and varied area, a fact reflected in the analysis of both 1975-90 Black migration for the South Atlantic States versus the rest of the South and in subregional population change after 1990.

Over the last quarter century, the South has turned a corner in the historic movement of Blacks to the North and West, especially those from rural and small-town communities. The Great Migration, entailing long-distance moves to places where Blacks had little prior representation, is essentially over. But the mutual interchange within the South between metro and nonmetro areas has developed at a scale not foreseen.

Increasingly, Black residents of the rural and small-town South are caught up in the effects and sprawl of metropolitan expansion or the growing use of rural areas by urban residents for recreation or retirement. Whatever the downside entails, such developments increase and diversify employment opportunities and diminish or end net migration losses. But other large segments of nonmetro Blacks continue to reside in areas, such as those noted in the western South, that still have high poverty rates, limited economic opportunities, and compelling reasons for young adults to leave.

The detailed 2000 Census results will provide further insight into the evolving dimensions, directions, and effects of Black nonmetro migration. Census data on additional characteristics of migrants, such as age, work status, and State of birth, will enhance our study. Our findings suggest it would also be useful to look at variations among smaller geographic groupings within the region than the two used in this work. The Black population continues to play a significant role in the remarkable changes occurring in rural and small-town America and merits further efforts to document and understand the demographic aspects of these changes.

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